IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) A method for connecting the front belt ends (9, 10) of transport belts (1) using a closure aid (13) that comprises a plurality of closure aid elements (14, 15) that are fastened at a distance from one another in the region of each of the two belt ends (9, 10), by way of attachment members (16, through 21), in such a way that they each link the belt ends (9, 10), the closure aid elements (14, 15) having tensioning elements (23) that pull the belt ends (9, 10) toward one another, and the belt ends (9, 10) then being connected to one another by means of coupling elements (11, 12), and the closure aid (13) then being removed from the transport belt (1),

   wherein lashing straps (14, 15), each having a lashing mechanism (23), are used as closure aid elements, actuation thereof causing the distance between the belt ends (9, 10) to be reduced to a coupling position that allows them to be coupled.

2. (Original) The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein the lashing straps (14, 15) are arranged at a spacing of 30 to 150 cm.

3. (Currently amended) The method as defined in Claim 1 [or 2], wherein the attachment members (16 through 21) are each attached at a distance of 20 to 80 cm from the belt end (9, 10).

4. (Currently amended) The method as defined in [any of Claims 1 through 3] Claim 1, wherein two-piece lashing straps each having a first strap on which the lashing mechanism is attached, and each having a second strap, are used, the first strap respectively being attached on the transport belt in the region of the one belt end, and the second strap in the region of the other belt end, by way of the attachment members.

5. (Currently amended) The method as defined in [any of Claims 1 through 3] Claim 1, wherein one-piece lashing straps (14, 15) having a single strap (22) are used; and an eyelet (16 through 21) is mounted in respectively opposite fashion in the region of the respective belt ends (9, 10) as the attachment member; and a respective strap (22) is then guided through two opposite eyelets (16, 17 and 18, 19 and 20, 21) and its free end is coupled to the lashing mechanism (23).

6. (Original) The method as defined in Claim 5, wherein the eyelets are formed from strap loops (16 through 21).

7. (Currently amended) The method as defined in [any of Claims 1 through 6] Claim 1, wherein the attachment members comprise or are made from coils that are pushed into a transport belt embodied as a wire element belt and coupled to it by insertion of a pintle wire into the transport belt.

8. (Currently amended) The method as defined in [any of Claims 1 through 6] Claim 1, wherein an auxiliary belt is provided between the attachment members (16 through 21) and the transport belt (1).

9. (Original) A transport belt (1) having coupling elements (11, 12) mounted on its front belt ends (9, 10), and having a closure aid (13) that comprises a plurality of closure aid elements (14, 15) that have attachment members (16, through 21) and, between the latter, tensioning elements (23), the attachment members (16 through 21) being attached or attachable in the region of the belt ends (9, 10) in such a way that the closure aid elements (14, 15) link the belt ends (9, 10), the closure aid (13) being removable from the transport belt (1) after the coupling of the belt ends (9, 10) has been made,

wherein the closure aid elements are embodied as lashing straps (14, 15) that, as tensioning elements, each comprise a lashing mechanism (23).

10. (Original) The transport belt as defined in Claim 9, wherein the lashing straps (14, 15) are arranged at a spacing of 30 to 150 cm transversely to the running direction of the transport belt (1).

11. (Currently amended) The transport belt as defined in Claim 9 [or 10], wherein the attachment members (16 through 21) are each attached at a distance of 20 to 80 cm from the belt end (9, 10) in the running direction of the transport belt (1).

12. (Currently amended) The transport belt as defined in [any of Claims 9 through 11] Claim 9, wherein the lashing straps are embodied in two pieces, having respectively a first strap on which the lashing mechanism is attached, and having a second strap, the first strap respectively being secured on the transport belt in

the region of the one belt end, and the second strap in the region of the other belt end, by way of the attachment members.

13. (Currently amended) The transport belt as defined in [any of Claims 9 through 11] Claim 9, wherein the lashing straps (14, 15) are embodied in one piece, having respectively a single strap (22); and an eyelet (16 through 21) is mounted in respectively opposite fashion in the region of the respective belt ends (9, 10) as the attachment member; and a respective strap (22) is then guided through both opposite eyelets (16, 17 and 18, 19 and 20, 21) and its free end is coupled to the associated lashing mechanism (23).

14. (Currently amended) The transport belt as defined in [any of Claims 9 through 13] Claim 9, wherein the attachment members comprise or are made from coils that are inserted into a transport belt embodied as a wire element belt and coupled to it by way of a pintle wire inserted into the transport belt (1).

15. (Currently amended) The transport belt as defined in [any of Claims 9 through 14] Claim 9, wherein each lashing mechanism (23) comprises a winding shaft (27) that is rotatable in the winding-on direction with the aid of a lashing lever (32).

16. (Original)The transport belt as defined in Claim 15, wherein the winding shaft (27) is in engagement with a first ratchet (29, 30) that prevents rotation of the winding shaft (27) in the unwinding direction; and the winding shaft (27) is in engagement via a second ratchet (29, 37) with the lashing lever (32), with which the winding shaft (27) can be driven only in the winding-on direction.

17. (Original)A closure aid (13) for temporary connection of the front belt ends (9, 10) of a transport belt (1), comprising a plurality of closure aid elements (14, 15) that have attachment members (16 through 21) for securing to the transport belt (1) as well as tensioning elements (23),

wherein the closure aid elements are embodied as lashing straps (14, 15) that, as tensioning elements, each comprise a lashing mechanism (23).

18. The closure aid as defined in Claim 17, wherein the lashing straps are embodied in two pieces, having respectively a first strap on which the lashing mechanism is attached, and having a second strap.

19. (Original) The closure aid as defined in Claim 17, wherein the lashing straps (14, 15) are embodied in one piece, having respectively a single strap (22); and associated with each of them as attachment members are two eyelets through which the strap (22) is guidable or guided.

20. (Currently amended) The closure aid as defined in [any of Claims 17 through 19] Claim 17, wherein the attachment members comprise or are made from coils that are inserted into the transport belt embodied as a wire element belt and can be coupled to it by way of a pintle wire inserted into the transport belt (1).

21. (Currently amended) The closure aid as defined in [any of Claims 17 through 20] Claim 17, wherein each lashing mechanism (23) comprises a winding shaft (27) that is rotatable in the winding-on direction with the aid of a lashing lever (32).

22. (Original) The closure aid as defined in Claim 21, wherein the winding shaft (27) is in engagement with a first ratchet (29, 30) that prevents rotation of the winding shaft (27) in the unwinding direction; and the winding shaft (27) is in engagement via a second ratchet (29, 37) with the lashing lever (32), with which the winding shaft (27) can be driven only in the winding-on direction.